A NOBLE PATTERN

FOR THE

IMITATION of all CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS

BEING

The Substance of a Letter sent to a converted Your Lady from a dying Person gradually approachi the World of Spirits.

For the wages of sin is death: But the gift of God is eternal life, throu Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. 23.

Come, thou last enemy, and strike thy dart;
Open my prison, that I may depart
To perfect liberty, that land of love,
To join the songs of all th' elect above.

DEAR MISS,

FEELING the symptoms of death powerfully worki within, and my mortal sun progressively declining some incurable distemper, which having lain fast h of my vitals, is bearing me away to the silent tomb, a speeding my passage into a boundless eternity, where I m perhaps, for a considerable time be debarred from conversi personally with you, and from being the author of a sin letter to my dear Friend;—before therefore I steal away i yonder regions, before our earthly ties are burst asunder, and tender connections utterly dissolved, which were by sovere direction so prudently formed, that they afforded a distant p spect of the fairest scenes of bliss below; let me, with a freedom, pour out my very soul into your fond bosom. I shortly to disappear from your weeping eyes, and leave y disappointed lover here below; whilst I shall attain the he of glory above, and in open vision be feasting on immo beatit

eatitudes and inextinguiſhable honours; be engaged deeply
ith all the glorified throng, in chanting forth ſongs of gra-
itude and praiſe to our divine Lover that redeemed us, by
hedding his moſt invaluable blood, and working out a ſoul-
ſtifying righteouſneſs. Though you may very poſſibly
egret my abſence, yet you cannot but rejoice at my
appineſs; you will not ſurely wiſh for me again below,
hough you may long to aſcend to me above. Be aſſured, I
lſo experience great reluctance in parting with a friend ſo
ccompliſhed in all thoſe amiable qualities that render your
ex ſo winning to the paſſions, ſo endearing to the heart, ſo
eſirable to live with, and ſo doubly happy as we have been
ith united hopes of everlaſting bleſſedneſs hereafter. Indulge
en this pleaſing thought: I know it is your privilege, my
hriſtian reader; let it revive your drooping ſpirits, and cheer
ke a cordial your fainting heart; let it heal your bleeding
ounds, and brighten this gloomy circumſtance. Enlarge
our views, give ſcope to your ideas, and expand your eternal
roſpects, and then I am perſuaded ſuch heavenly light will
reak in on your darkneſs, ſuch a peace will take its reſidence
your mind, ſuch a calm will ſucceed the preſent ſtorm, that
l complaints will be huſhed in ſilence; praiſe will flow from
our tongue, and your very heart will rejoice in tribulation.
earken not to what bereaved friendſhip may ſuggeſt to you;
t be all attention to the language of infinite Wiſdom and
ove—That tells you (and O the charming purport of its
ews!) all things ſhall—be they proſperity or adverſity,
alth or ſickneſs, confinement or liberty, life or death—work
gether for the everlaſting good of elected ſouls. And ſtill
ore to ſtrengthen our belief, encourage our patience, and
cite our ſubmiſſion, it declares, that what we know not
w we ſhall know hereafter, to the growing admiration,
ve, and praiſe of our new capacities and enlarged powers. Innu-
erable more paſſages of the ſame nature, might be mention-
, but the limits of a letter will not permit me to ſpecify
em; beſides, I firmly believe I am addreſſing one that is a
ry forward ſtudent in the holy ſcriptures. I only would
commend you therefore ſtill to truſt in the name of the
ord, and ſtay your troubled mind upon his bleſſed promiſes;
rbouring in your breaſt no diſhonouring ſuſpicions of his
ve, but with adoring humility acknowledging the equity
his conduct, and the juſtneſs of his proceedings, being per-
ded the Judge of the whole earth cannot but act right. In
ſtrongeſt terms, I would entreat you alſo to adhere to

Chriſt,

Chriſt, laying the whole ſtreſs of your immortal hopes on his perfect atonement; attending on thoſe places of divine Worſhip where the goſpel is preached in its original power, ſimplicity, and beauty; and being ſecured by almighty power, encompaſſed by everlaſting love, ſtrengthened by ſovereign grace, and directed by unerring wiſdom, you are not only pardonedand adopted, ſaved and happy, rich and ſtrong, but you are and will be made more than a conqueror through him that loveth you. Be ſatisfied, then, ſince theſe bleſſings are yours by an indiſputable title; if you wait the Lord's time, light will ere long ſpring out of darkneſs, gladneſs out of ſorrow, and love out of the croſs. It is true, you will ſoon be deprived of my company, death being inexorable to your flowing tears, your fervent prayers, and your warmeſt expoſtulations. I have frequently accompanied you to the church here below, ſweetly talking together, by the way, on the charms of Emanuel's perſon, the excellence and compleatneſs of his atoning ſacrifice, the depths of his condeſcenſion and abaſement, the freeneſs and immenſeneſs of his love, the glories of his exaltation, and the prevalency of his interceſſion; which have confirmed our choice, comforted our ſouls, enlivened our affections, and raiſed our hopes; yet, pray be not inconſolable, probably God may bring you acquainted with a friend far more ſignificant and uſeful than ſuch a poor ignorant ſinful creature as I could poſſibly be to you. Indeed I ſhould be glad you would be a partner with me to the church triumphant; it would yield me exquiſite delight to take you by the hand, and conduct you into that kingdom of glory, where death will be ſwallowed up in victory; never more to divide the endearments of friendſhip; where ſin, the world, and ſatan ſhall ceaſe to worry and vex us; where honour and joy, harmony, love, and praiſe, ſhall grow and flouriſh, bloom and bloſſom, in one eternal ſpring! But this pious wiſh or rather idle thought, will not be gratified. Since God ſays, you muſt ſtay awhile behind me, I dare not reply, "It is hard, pray "let her croſs with me the ſwellings of Jordan, that we may "together enter the reſt provided for weary travellers and "victorious conquerors"—No, my friend, you expect to hear no ſuch ſtrange rebellious expreſſions drop from my mouth. No; let this be the language of thoſe who, when dying, have no proſpect of meeting their huſbands and wives, their children, friends, companions, and every other comfort in the intermediate ſtate: but as this (adored be free diſtinguiſhing grace!) is not our dreadful caſe, nor awful parting; on the contrary

contrary, having a moſt pleaſing hope, founded on the immoveable Rock of ages, that we ſhall one day meet each other again with the ſweeteſt kiſſes and moſt rapturous congratulations, never, no never to part more—May this animating conſideration, then, eaſe your mind, ſwallow up your momentary ſorrows, and inſpire you with unabating ardour to run your race, fight your battles, and proſecute your heavenly march till death ſhall mow you down, and waft your redeemed ſpirit to the delightful land above! But I ſhall now diſmiſs this affecting part of my epiſtle, as it tends too much, in my infirm enfeebled ſtate to ſink my ſpirits, and exhauſt the little ſtrength I have; and ſhall now lead your thoughts into a field of a different nature—I am preſently going to divulge to you the ſtate of my mind and the frame of my ſoul. I am now bidding the world farewel, its ſweeteſt roſes are fading before my ſwimming eyes, and death and judgment, heaven and hell, are repreſented to my views in the liveleſt manner. When I look back, and take a ſurvey of my actions in life, not a drop of comfort can I taſte from them. I recal to my mind thoſe providential events which I have experienced on this ſtage of action, and thoſe that wore the moſt gloomy aſpect, if I ſpeak the truth, I muſt ſay proved in the iſſue my choiceſt bleſſings, inaſmuch as all of them have borne a part to promote my everlaſting welfare: and thoſe hopes which now ariſe in my guilty breaſt, which make death appear ſo welcome, quaſhing all the charges of ſatan, removing every fear, and rendering the world to come ſo deſirable, are alone raiſed on the glorious foundation of the righteouſneſs of my precious, ſurpaſſingly precious Saviour, who has enabled me to reject, with the utmoſt abhorrence, and averſation, the leaſt dependence on thoſe refuges of lyes, which, though pleaſing to human pride, yet prove certain damnation to the ſoul. Let others place their confidence in ſplendid profeſſions and works of piety, I will relinquiſh all truſt here, claſping by faith my Jeſus in my arms, and alone clinging around his croſs; deteſting myſelf as a loathſome hell-deſerving ſinner; knowing, if ſuch a profligate wretch as I am be ſaved, it muſt be in diſclaiming all merit, and depending on that unlimited grace which pardons the greateſt ſins, and ſaves the vileſt miſcreants; and upon this ground my feet ſhall ſtand, whether I be pardoned or condemned, ſaved or damned: but here it would be an inexcuſable miſſion, if I paſſed on without expatiating, by a few thoughts, on that tranſcendent grace which made us to differ from the reſt of mankind, who are ruſhing on in a mad career of pride and vice down to unavoidable perdition.—It is not a deſcent

from

from the moſt religious parents (though I own with thankfulneſs that was my peculiar privilege)—it is not the beſt nor pureſt education—it is not the moſt happy ſtation in life—that will convey ſpiritual life into a ſoul born dead in ſin: no; daily obſervation and ſelf-experience abundantly prove the reverſe; miniſters, parents, and friends, may pray, wiſh, and do all they can for the ſalvation of thoſe they are connected with (and indeed they are ſolemnly bound in duty to act this friendly office) but all will prove ineffectual, without the exertion of a ſuperior power; for Paul may plant, and Apollos water, yet their ſeed ſown will rot in the ground, and come to nothing, without the fructifying influences of the celeſtial Spirit. Nevertheleſs, far be it from me to ſet aſide the uſe of means; no, I eſteem them as very excellent and proper things, which the Lord is frequently pleaſed to bleſs, to anſwer the important purpoſes of his electing love; yet we muſt look above all to the Appointer of them, whoſe ſole prerogative it is to put life into them. However, I verily believe, the principal part of the elect body will conſiſt of thoſe who once were the moſt ignorant and diſſolute, the moſt vulgar and deſpiſed, that human pride may be confounded, and all boaſting from the creature excluded; that the whole ſalvation of a ſinner may be the Lord's doing, and his conſummate grace appear marvellous in our eyes. Why, my dear friend, is it that we are thus privileged, diſtinguiſhed, and bleſſed? Becauſe the Lord will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth; that ſalvation ſhall not be of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of his own pure wiſdom and power, love and grace. Let us not, then, be anxious to comprehend what is not permitted to be revealed to us here, but in aſtoniſhment cry out in wonder and praiſe, O the depths of the riches both of the knowledge and the goodneſs of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out! And however theſe glorious myſteries, theſe precious truths, and the advocates for them, may have a load of odium thrown upon them, becauſe they are ſo humbling to the proud, and obnoxious to the voluptuous; yet they are facts ſo divine and illuſtrious, that their glory ſhines brighter, their truths become more extenſively propagated, and more univerſally received, even by perſecution, perverſion and ſlander. I have now but two or three things in my eye to handle, and then, I ſhall conclude this letter——Notwithſtanding then, this letter brings you the ſad unwelcome news, that my departure from this world is nigh at

hand,

hand, yet it brings you also the joyful tidings that I am happy in my hopes, and charmed with my prospects——It tells you many sweet and agreeable truths, and gives you the most affectionate exhortations; and let it speak a few useful words more, and I shall have said as much as can be comprised in the compass of a letter. You plainly see, my valued reader, by this dispensation of providence, that it is dangerous presumption, and foolish conduct, to set our hearts inordinately upon the most promising good below, since death is shooting his arrow around us, and is now levelling one at my mortal breast——Suffer not your passions, then, I beseech you, to be too much enamoured with any beautiful flower, as death withers and kills it in a moment——believing all beneath the sun to be but vanity and vexation of spirit—that all the honours, pleasures, and gains of this world, which unthinking mortals employ all their thoughts and time about to secure, are but airy dreams and empty shadows, which are no more able to fill with satisfying bliss the capacious powers of the soul, than a drop of water is to overflow the earth, or my hand is to span the vast circumference of this globe. I know they will strongly court your affections in a variety of inviting forms; but let them not divorce your heart from your heavenly Lover; let them not exclude this fairest object from your thoughts. O beware of too close familiarity with them, and shun their public places of resort. But the pleasures Jesus gives you, are refined and substantial; and the union that subsists between you (Oh ravishing thought!) is permanent and everlasting. Let my decease, then, teach you this happy lesson, to contract and moderate your regards for all sublunary enjoyments, that you may fasten your affections on those objects of faith which will never deceive your expectations, but abundantly exceed your most sanguine hopes. May my death be so sanctified and blessed to you, that it may be the means of rousing you up to greater diligence in the divine warfare, and redouble the life of every duty—straining every nerve within you to revive the interest of religion if possible; to oppose the errors of mankind, and to vindicate the doctrines of grace—dead to all the suggestions of satan and unmoved by all the censures of men; knowing that if you be reproached for Christ's sake, happy are you, for the Spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you. But finally, let me revive in your mind the delightful hope of the gospel, which I trust will dispel the gloom the contents of this letter may have cast over your mind. You have already chosen that good part which shall never be taken from you;

you

you have ſtarted a candidate for the immortal prize; and grace, almighty grace, enſures you the victory. When a few more ſtruggles with corruption, a few more conflicts with temptation, when a few more graces are obtained, and a few more luſts are deſtroyed, your victory will be won, and your ſtorms will be blown over. Lift up, then, your head which bends down with ſorrow, and leap with joy, for your compleat redemption is advancing nigh, and your ſorrows are gliding away with your revolving days and years; and though I leave you, yet you are not alone, travelling through this thorny maze to the fair regions of Canaan above, for God is with you; and he will guide you by his counſel, ſtrengthen you by his power, encourage you by his viſits of love, and bear you onward in his tender arms; and if my abode had been protracted longer with you on earth, I could not have furniſhed you with any ſuch ſuccours, nor yielded you any ſuch helps; and I hope you will forgive me, that my attempts, ſince I have known you, have been ſo few and languid to inſtruct and comfort you. And now may grace enable you to ſay, "The Lord's will be done," and to acknowledge all is well, whilſt I commend you, in earneſt prayer, to the grace of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, remaining whilſt here below, till our new everlaſting friendſhip ſhall commence above,

Your unchangeable friend,

And affectionate, though unworthy,

Brother in Chriſt the beloved,

WATLING-STREET,
No. 49.

W. W.

An HYMN.

I.

WHAT mortal can paint, what tongue can declare,
The hopes I poſſeſs, and the pleaſures I ſhare,
Springing from love, ſo delightfully free,
Which Jeſus has ſeal'd to ſuch rebels as me!

II.

How ſweet is it dying, how ſoft is my bed,
Thrice happy my ſoul, though my body be dead!
Painful their parting, but ſoon they ſhall meet
Divinely improved, and fully compleat.

III.

Hail, then, kind minute; I long to remove,
Diſmiſs me from earth, and waft me above,
Where ſickneſs and ſin for ever will ceaſe,
Where joy is eternal, and laſting is peace.

FINIS.

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